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NEEDED RESEARCH IN THE AREA OF TEACHER SELECTION.

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ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE PRESENT STATE OF TEACHER SELECTION PRACTICES AND PROPOSALS FOR RESEARCH IN THE AREA ARE DESCRIBED. EXAMPLES OF THE FORMER INCLUDE--(1) INTEREST IN TEACHER SELECTION NEEDS TO BE STIMULATED. (2) PROFESSIONAL TEACHER SELECTION PRACTICES ARE RARELY USED (LARGE SCHOOL SYSTEMS ENGAGE IN SCREENING, WHILE SMALL, AFFLUENT ONES RELY ON "HUNCH REJECTIONS" AND "GLOBAL PERUSAL"). (3) RESEARCH NEEDS TO BE ENCOURAGED AND ITS FINDINGS WIDELY DISSEMINATED. PROPOSALS INCLUDE (A) A BROAD INVESTIGATION BY SOCIOLOGISTS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS IN TEACHER SELECTION RESEARCH, AIMED AT UNDERSTANDING THE "AVOIDANCE ATTITUDES" OF POTENTIAL RESEARCH WORKERS, (B) RESEARCH PERSONNEL WORKERS TAKE ADVANTAGE OF (1) THE TEACHER SHORTAGE TO LOWER THE SELECTION CUTOFF SCORES TO PROVIDE A GREATER RANGE FOR ASSESSMENT OF PREDICTIVE VALIDITY, AND (2) THE OVERSUPPLY OF SUPERVISORY AND ADMINISTRATIVE APPLICANTS TO TEST THE EFFICACY OF MULTIPLE AND VARIED SELECTION DEVICES, (C) THE IMMEDIATE USE BY RESEARCH WORKERS OF WHATEVER MEASURES (E.G. RATINGS, PEER NOMINATIONS) OF TEACHER SUCCESS THEY HAVE AVAILABLE, INSTEAD OF WAITING FOR PERFECT MEASURES. IN THIS FASHION THE USEFULNESS FOR SELECTION OF VARIOUS METHODOLOGIES APPLIED TO VARIOUS DIMENSIONS COULD BE DETERMINED. THIS DOCUMENT APPEARED IN GILBERT, H.B., AND LANG, G., "TEACHER SELECTION METHODS," 1967. (AF)

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TEACHER SELECTION METHODS

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Needed Research in the Area of Teacher Selection

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I Assumptions

There are three basic assumptions that underlie the specific proposals I shall outline. Permit me to make them explicit.

1. Interest in the area of teacher selection is minimal based upon the actual amount of research under way. However a great deal of interest does exist among teacher personnel selectors and universities. The problem is to make patent what's latent.

2. Professional teacher selection practices are rarely employed. In large school systems that presume to be using selection techniques, screening is actually what is done. In smaller, affluent school districts, hunch rejections and global perusals, sometimes in actual observations, serve as selection techniques.

   A moment's reflection on the current shortage of teachers, particularly in those school districts perceived to be "tough", will confirm the probability that this assumption is warranted.

3. Since the field of teacher selection is a great big area up for grabs, it is desirable that research be encouraged in varieties of approaches, without too much specificity. It follows, of course, that wide dissemination of research be encouraged and that investigators be supported with the notion that hypotheses may be rejected as well as verified by experimental data. Regrettably this simple dictum, readily understood in university settings, seems to be a heretic notion in an age when innovations are publicized as successes before evaluation.

II Proposals

1. Attention must be paid to the process of stimulating attention to the methodology of teacher selection and to research, which must inevitably be an assessment of the validity of presently employed procedures and those yet to be tried or designed. Surely we can agree that fundamental research on teacher behavior - and on pupil-teacher interaction as an outcome of the teacher-stimulus must be encouraged. What is needed is understanding of why so important a field for research continues to be neglected, despite

promising starts by such workers as Withall, Mitzel and Ryans. The simple answer - too difficult - seems not enough in an age when complex problems are tackled with the resources made available by contemporary cash flow.

I suggest therefore that social psychologists and sociologists be invited to investigate broadly the field of research in teacher selection for their aid in understanding avoidance attitudes of potential research workers. There is no disposition to hide the obvious - that I have made a value judgment and that the purpose would be to be able to persuade research talent into action in this sphere.

I propose too that we evaluate the effectiveness of the design of this conference, with its influential participants, as a means of stirring interest and action in teacher selection practice and research.

2. We should take advantage of current supply and demand in the area of teacher selection. Specifically I refer to the shortage of teachers as the country begins to wake up to the great need for teachers and pumps green blood into local systems from the great big Federal artery. Teacher shortage gives the personnel research man a rare opportunity. He can lower his selection cut-off scores to provide a greater range for assessment of predictive validity. It will take some degree of courage to do this, although some reflection on the lack of predictive validity data should be encouragement enough.

At the same time, there is always an over-supply of applicants for supervisory or administrative positions in education. This should serve to be a source of comfort for those who would argue that one cannot be selective, or try to be, with teachers when we need all who apply. Furthermore, it is palatable to applicants to be fed a variety of selection techniques when there are more applicants than positions to be filled. This presents the opportunity to employ varied and multiple devices, to a socially accepting, even willing, group.

3. I now come to some specific proposals. First, I make reference to the 16 "Suggestions for Further Research" on pages 55-57 of "Teacher Selection Policies and Procedures in Large Public School Systems in the United States." There should be enough ideas here to generate several bushels of Ph.D.'s or Ed.D.'s.

I should like to take the time to express myself on the perennial dissuader - the lack of sound criteria. The fact is that sound criteria exist only in relatively simple occupations and not in complex professions. Worker output, in terms of quantity, or

quality, or time, or a combination thereof, can be employed as criteria for production line employees. But where do you go when everybody knows how hard it is to define "success in teaching" particularly since this amorphous generalization (bad to begin with) keeps shifting in different school settings, at different levels and with different subjects?

At least we have learned from previous study that the overall, general estimate of "success in teaching" is a concept to be discarded. We can work with dimensions of teacher performance, as the local hiring school system defines them. These dimensions may be with respect to teacher behavior, such as "evocative of pupil participation," "encouraging pupil-pupil interaction," "accepting of deviant behavior," etc. They may be with respect to the ultimate in expectancy, namely pupil development, in skills, knowledge, or attitudes.

Let's not beat a dead horse. We can all agree that research is necessary to refine and define the dimensions and to determine methods objectively - or reasonably objectively - to assess them. I propose that we accept crude estimates of the extremes in dimensions and not wait for the millennium. I propose that we engage task forces of teachers, teacher educators, school administrators and personnel experts to agree on working definitions of dimensions of teacher behavior on a scale from "most desirable" to "least desirable." Then obtain nominations for extremes on these scales - the "best" and the "worse." Various procedures can be employed for these nominations. They could be peer nominative techniques, observer ratings, supervisor ratings, pupil nominations and measured pupil performance. Hopefully a variety of techniques would be employed.

I am arguing in short, for our getting started with best available techniques to obtain criteria while others among us continue more basic research.

In another setting (APA Annual Meeting, September 1966) I have also urged that we utilize the best informed personnel minds to review present selection procedures. While I would hardly classify such activity as research, I do maintain that some improvement in present procedures can ensue, without waiting for results of years of study.

In short, I am urging a redirection of energy to the problem of teacher selection research and procedure, in a reasonable and practical way without sacrificing the ongoing need for basic research.

Finally I would like to propose the need to establish a

clearinghouse for research and practice in teacher selection. I don't know who would establish this. I believe the field is important enough that some university interested in developing this branch of educational administration might be encouraged to assume such leadership. Certainly a repository of findings with dissemination facilities would be a major resource in development of interest in the field.